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#### CHAPTER X.

Holbin received the negro woman's report in desperation. Upon the second night after, casting aside all scruples, he went to his mother's room. She had not retired, but was busy with her correspondence, which she put aside as her son entered the door. Without seeking to read them he saw "Washington, D. C.," upon several sealed letters, a fact that he recalled later. The smile of pleasure which lit up her severe countenance disappeared when she noted the look of anger and distress on his face.

"Well," she said, "are you still dissatisfied?" It was their first meeting alone since the death of John Brooklin. "Do not congratulate yourself too soon, mother. The game is but half played out, and we may find that strong cards are held against us."

"What do you mean by that?" He walked the room, pausing at times before her as she sat in her armchair. Her black eyes followed him. Her white face was frozen into an impenetrable mask. He described the occurrences of the last few days, and made a clean breast of it all, reserving only certain facts in connection with his experience with Louise, among which was the existence of a child. These reservations he mentally classed as irrelevant.

It is not likely that Raymond's confessions greatly surprised his mother. She was, in fact, already familiar with most of his history. The disturbing elements of his statement were the dangerous character of Louise and the astounding circumstances of the shooting. Yet these drew from Mrs. Brooklin no comment, no evidence of excitement or dismay. She regarded her son silently and sternly for a few moments, then dropped into a chair. A flush at length overspread her white face. Raymond knew that it was the advance wave of a tide of anger and hesitation when she ordered him to ring the bell. She arose calmly, and crossing the room pulled the bell cord as deliberately as though to summon her carriage. A few minutes after, during which time she stood rigidly looking down on her son, William, the butler appeared.

"Go to Dr. Brodnar immediately," she said, "and tell him to come to me; that Miss Frances is desperately ill."

"Mother!" She waved the servant away and turned upon her son with unrestrained anger. "Do you think that I fear him? Do you think that I shall sit quietly by and let him introduce people into this house—into my stepdaughter's room—in the night and entangle us in his plots? Oh, that I were a man!" She was now a caged tigress, and giving freedom to long-suppressed fury. "It would be nothing less than the coward's hide!"

"You forget Frances?" "I forget nothing! I realize, on the contrary, sir, that both Frances and her doctor are at my mercy now. He dare not betray her! And this comes of your shameful dallying with that woman—you!—my son!—the puppet, the plaything, the slave of a—"

"Wait, mother! You forget yourself, at least—and me. I am not a child. A little more, and I shall leave this house not to enter it again. Be careful what you say—and be careful of Frances. Prove her guilty of any crime and you defeat your own plans."

No amount of pleading, no love or affection on the part of her boy, could have swayed the tempestuous woman as quickly as open defiance. In such moments he resembled the one human being whose fiery temper and relentless brutality had ever awed her. Raymond played his part well: "You shall not denounce me for one infamy only to link me to another."

"If you had shown such spirit with Brodnar," she said, bitterly.

"If I had! Words—blows—a duel! Then the truth would have come out. To accept the responsibilities of the will afterwards would be contemptible. No, mother, you women see but one side of such a matter. What would become of us should Louise make herself known? Start the police upon this matter, and they will ferret her out."

"Why have you not taken her away? You have been imprudent in delaying that."

"Nervous prostration. I have a nurse with her. To-morrow, if she may travel, I shall get her out of the city. For God's sake give me time to do that. You have no idea what you are risking."

"Doctor out, ma'am," said William, returning at this moment. "Young doctor say he will see 'im room' des soon as he come back—dere now! front do 'bell ringin' dis minute like some-body tryin' to pull it tru de do'. Dat's de doctor, ev'rytime."

"Stand behind the portiere in my dressing-room," said the mother to her son, who was preparing to depart. "and under no circumstances let yourself be seen!" Almost immediately Dr. Brodnar entered the room.

"You sent for me, madam," he began. "Where is Frances?"

"Asleep, I suppose. I have been guilty of a fiction, but my intentions are good. Dr. Brodnar, who was the man you took from my house wounded, and for what purpose was he here? I demand an instant answer!"

"I desire to make any statement, madam, touching my professional business or to discuss this matter with you. Good evening."

"Hold, sir, or I shall place the affair in the hands of the police."

"Hardly, I think. But proceed in that way if you prefer. Good evening."

"You think that I am afraid of publicity; wait and see! I shall denounce you, sir, over my own signature. I shall make your name a football for scandal mongers in every town in this state."

"And how about your son's, madam? You desire above all things that Raymond Holbin shall marry your stepdaughter and inherit under the will of the man who coddled and bullied out of his senses. The name of the man who was shot I shall not tell you, but I will tell you the name of the woman who shot him—I thought you were the woman. I was mistaken, and for this error I owe you an apology."

"This is infamous!" "I was mistaken, I say, honestly. For I thought that the woman who would retreat from her dying husband, appealing to her with his heart in his eyes, who would link an orphan girl to a libertine, might easily pull a trigger to remove a lesser obstacle." The woman rushed up to him with hands clenched.

"Scoundrel! If I had the weapon now I would prove your judgment! Out of my house!" Dr. Brodnar smiled wickedly.

"I was mistaken," he continued, coolly; "the woman who shot this unknown gentleman lies, half delirious, in room 23 at the Spotswood, and her name is Louise. And, madam, I will do her full justice; she erred in her information and her aim. For the man she hoped to destroy was this libertine, cashiered, swindling, cheating son of yours. Denounce me, but breathe a word against the fame of Frances Brooklin, and I shall go before Richmond with my cause. Good evening."

He bowed mockingly, and was turning away when the portiere was flung violently aside and Holbin rushed on him from behind. A keen knife in his hand flashed in the gas light and fell, but once only. Maddened with the pain and enraged at the cowardly attack, Brodnar lifted his assailant from the floor and hurled him across the room. He fell in a heap against the wall, the knife rolling to the feet of the frantic woman. To snatch it up and throw herself upon the athlete was an instant's action; but she was impotent to harm him then. He seized her wrists and turned the right one slowly but remorselessly. Her pale lips uttered no sound, but the long white fingers relaxed at length under the terrific ordeal and the knife fell to the floor. Kicking it across the room, he pushed the woman away, and stepping outside the door, closed it behind him. He heard the furious ringing of the butler's bell, and soon beheld William running clumsily through the hall. He had opened the front door, but the servant having passed, he changed his mind, and having slammed the door made his way down and back to the wing occupied by Frances. She had retired, but arose at once.

"Bring your key and let me out at the gate," he said, "and quickly." She threw on her wrapper and wonderingly obeyed. "I have found the other woman in the case," he continued, hurriedly as they traversed the garden. "It is all very sad, my child, and too late now to be remedied." He could not see the girl's face nor understand that there was room for any misconception of his statement; that her mind was occupied with Richard Somers, as he had been with Holbin. Frances felt as though the blood was freezing in her veins.

"What woman?" "The woman who did the shooting!"

"Why—why—what was her motive?" "Jealousy!" he replied, briefly.

"What I want to say to you is this: something has happened to-night that will prevent my returning here. You must come to see me occasionally, and always when needing advice or help. In the meantime keep up your courage. Nobody can disturb the big fact in our case. We have the law on our side. I shall explain it all some time. And our wounded friend—you don't ask of him—is better and impatient. He will leave Richmond to-night. Good-by."

"Oh, wait!" cried the girl in anguish. "The woman—where is she?"

"At the Spotswood and ill." He felt the blood running from a stab in his shoulder down his arm, and, fearful of the effect should the excited girl discover that he was wounded, he hurried away to his assistant. Frances waited at the gate, her face in her hands, her heart aching. With a sudden and despairing resolution she went back to her room.

"Quick, mammy, help me to dress; I must go to the hotel!"

"Lord 'a' mussy, chile, what de matter?"

"Help me, mammy—quick! Don't ask any questions."

Frances started away, wringing her hands and sobbing, but in the crowded streets, where men were cheering and cannon firing over the announcement that Virginia had succeeded, and thousands of torch-lights blazed the way, she grew bolder. The general excitement was in her favor and no one attached importance to her visit. She reached and entered the sick woman's room, and, motioning away the hired nurse, dropped upon her knees by the bedside. Louise, calmer under the opiates administered by the doctor, regarded her as she might have one descended from the clouds. Something like a spasm of fear passed over her, for in the lovely face beside her she seemed to see the image of her own youth repeated.

"Who are you?" she asked, wildly.

"Your friend. Don't excite yourself."

"Your name? your name?"

"Frances Brooklin! And, oh, I am so sorry for you, so very sorry!" Louise seemed to have heard only the name, which she repeated softly, wonderingly.

"Frances Brooklin! And your father—who was he?"

"John Brooklin."

"Ah, my God!" And the face upon the pillow was turned away in shame and confusion. After awhile she looked back, a strange light in her eyes.

"What do you want of me?" she asked, suspiciously.

"I wanted to tell you," said Frances, covering her face and sobbing anew, "that I didn't know—of you! That if I had no power on earth could have won my consent. Oh, I have been deceived—cruelly, cruelly."

Louise, who was ignorant that Frances was the girl in the room at the time of the shooting, now saw her opportunity. She raised herself eagerly.

"You are my rival, then. You came only in pity."

"Yes. And to ask your forgiveness. You have nothing to fear from me."

A glad light filled the eyes of Louise. She could with difficulty restrain herself and control her voice.

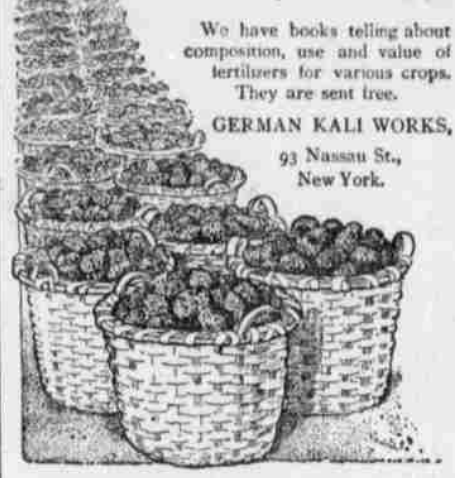
"I believe you," she said. "You will not take him from me—from his child!"

"His child!" Frances was shocked and dismayed. "His child! Is there a child—of his?"

"Yes," said Louise, "but if you reveal that I shall never be allowed to see her again. You will not tell, will you?"

"No," said the wretched girl. "Your secret is safe with me. And, oh, I believed in him—I trusted him so!" She wrung her hands and turned away her face.

Two hundred bushels of potatoes remove eighty pounds of "actual" Potash from the soil. Unless this quantity is returned to the soil, the following crop will materially decrease.



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"It is fortunate you found him out in time," said Louise; "with me, it was too late—too late! But please do not stay here. How did you find me out?"

"The doctor. He told me about you. He has told me everything, and I wanted to see you."

"Don't cry, my dear child. What seems a great sorrow to you now is really a blessing. You have made a miserable woman happy by your coming. Go now! He may enter at any moment, and it would be painful to see him. Will you promise?"

"I shall keep your secret," said Frances. "It is safe with me. Forgive me—if I have made you unhappy."

"I am sorry for you," said Louise, simply. Frances lifted her head proudly.

"You need not be. I am shocked and mortified; that is all."

"No," said the wretched girl, "your secret is safe with me."

their din to the confusion. Upon every hat were the red letters "M.M."

It was a demonstration by the famous "Minute Men," who rose in every southern city as they had risen nearly 100 years before when the drums beat. Suddenly she was jammed against a carriage, the progress of which had been stayed by the crowd. Its sole occupant was a pale, silent man. In the glare of the torches his face exactly filled lines ineludibly fixed in her memory by the brief flame of a match: it was the face of Richard Somers, cold and immobile. Upon the seat by his side was a traveling-bag; his eyes looked out calmly, almost coldly, over her head. He was not southern, he was not a Virginian, and the hour awoke no response within his heart. Impulsively, and forgetting, she stretched her hands upward, but memory returned and checked the words that rose to her lips. Only an inarticulate cry burst from them, a cry low and half smothered in the roar of voices. Yet low as it was, it reached the occupant of the carriage. Something in that voice, a tone, a vibration, touched a memory-cell. He turned quickly and looked back; a girl holding desperately to the arm of an old negro was being borne along by the tumultuous human wave. For an instant only he saw her white face upturned to his—the loveliest, saddest face his eyes had ever gazed on, and from her lips he heard come back one word—

"Farewell!" Forgetting all but that he was leaving his life somewhere in the fierce passions surging behind him, he made a desperate effort to alight from the vehicle, but so dense was the crowd the door would not open. And then angry men seized the rearing horses and forced them out of the way. When he was free again only a sea of flame, in whose depths human figures seemed to march, met his gaze. It had swallowed up the woman's white face. A great transparency, swaying and wavering like a drunken man, thrust itself before his vision and blotted out the scene. Upon it was the legend: "Down with the Yankees!"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

HOTEL AT PARIS BURNED.

One Man, Aged Seventy, Perished in the Flames.

Special to the Herald.

PARIS, Tenn., April 1.—The Hoffman Hotel at this place burned to the ground this morning, and John Durkee, aged seventy, perished in the flames. The loss on the hotel building and furniture amounted to \$5,000; insurance about \$3,000.

How Are Your Kidneys?

Dr. Hobbins' Kidney Pills cure all kidney ills. Sample free. Add: Sterling Remedy Co., Chicago or N. Y.

50c. and \$1.00; all druggists.

SCOTT'S EMULSION

of Cod Liver Oil is the means of life, and enjoyment of life to thousands: men women and children.

When appetite fails, it restores it. When food is a burden, it lifts the burden.

When you lose flesh, it brings the plumpness of health.

When work is hard and duty is heavy, it makes life bright.

It is the thin edge of the wedge; the thick end is food. But what is the use of food, when you hate it, and can't digest it?

Scott's Emulsion of Cod Liver Oil is the food that makes you forget your stomach.

If you have not tried it, send for free sample. Its agreeable taste will surprise you.

SCOTT & BOWNE, Chemists, 409 Pearl Street, New York.

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THE COLUMBIA HERALD: FRIDAY, APRIL 2, 1901

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She was going when Louise called her back.

"Let me see your face again, my child. Ah, how beautiful you are! Good-by, I trust you. Don't grieve about him. He cannot ever be trusted. You were to be the victim of a plot, and your friends are deceiving you. Why, the man is poor; ruined, unless he gets your fortune. He came from Europe to marry you—ah, God, he deserted me, he betrayed his child—for your money. Trust none of them, for they are desperate. They take advantage of your youth—they would persuade you into a hurried marriage."

"But I could not, I could not be bound legally by such a travesty—such a fraud!"

"Your fortune would, and that is what he wants—that, and not you. Secure in that, he would be willing to let you go forever. Oh, but I know him. Give him the shadow of a title to your fortune and you are lost!"

"But to think that Dr. Brodnar could have deceived me so—my mother's friend! I cannot, I cannot believe it!"

"My child, trust no one. Possibly the doctor himself was deceived; it has been long since he knew him; and the man is a finished actor. Trust no man. The man who will not deceive a woman for his own advantage does not live. I know the world. If I do not, who does?"

Frances took the hand of the sick woman in both of her own and held it in sympathy and grief.

"I must leave you," she said, brokenly. "Will you not tell me your name? I shall always remember you in my prayers." Louise half raised herself in the bed.

"My name! Then he did not tell you all. No, my child, do not seek to find out my name. Pray for me, if you will—and remember me as a woman more sinned against than sinning. Good night and good-by."

As Frances hurried homeward, choking and sick with her sorrow, she found herself caught in the whirls and eddies of a great crowd and borne along helplessly past her street. Men carried torches and were cheering themselves hoarse, while horns added

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